

## **Make 2017 a year for providing relief to victims of crime: CJI**

Chief Justice of India J S Khehar today asked legal volunteers to work for the victims of crime this year, saying he wondered what happens to the victims of rape or acid attacks or those who lose their bread earners, while the criminals got access to justice till the very end.

Calling upon legal volunteers to reach out to them to ensure they get the due compensation, he said in India, a convict in a terror crime has all possible access to justice as permissible under the law, even after exhausting all legal remedies upto the Supreme Court.

The Chief Justice was apparently referring to the case of 1993 Mumbai blast lone death row convict Yakub Memon whose petition challenging his capital punishment was rejected during the day on July 29, 2015 by the Supreme Court, but some activist lawyers had moved another plea the same night for re-examination of the verdict as the guilty was to be hanged on the morning of July 30.

The apex court had agreed to the request and accorded urgent hearing and, in a special sitting of a bench heard the plea for more than two hours from 0200 hours on July 30 as well as Memon's counsel at length to reiterate its decision upholding the death sentence.

"Ours is a strange country. The bigger the criminal, the bigger is the outrage. As we have seen before that the convict in a terrorist crime who has failed up to the

Supreme Court and also in his review, can get access to justice in a manner that we extend.

"I have wondered over the years, what about the victims.

I have wondered over the years what about the families which have lost their bread earner. I have wondered over the years what about that acid attack victim who has been defaced and cannot survive the society. I think about rape victims and their lives and I wonder why we don't reach out to them.

"I wish to make an appeal to you today as a patron of the organisation. Let us reach out to the victims. Make 2017 a year of the victims," Justice Khehar said in his inaugural address of the 15th All India meet of State Legal Service Authorities.

The CJI asked National Legal Service Authority (NALSA), State Legal Services Authority and District Legal Service Authorities to send their para-legal volunteers to every trial court to inform the victims that their right to compensation is not closed.

"Let us send our para-legal volunteers to every trial court to inform the victims. Let us inform every victim about section 357A of CrPC, that he has the right to compensation.

"Let us make them understand that the case is not closed with the acquittal or conviction of the accused. Let us have a heart and reach the victims," he said.